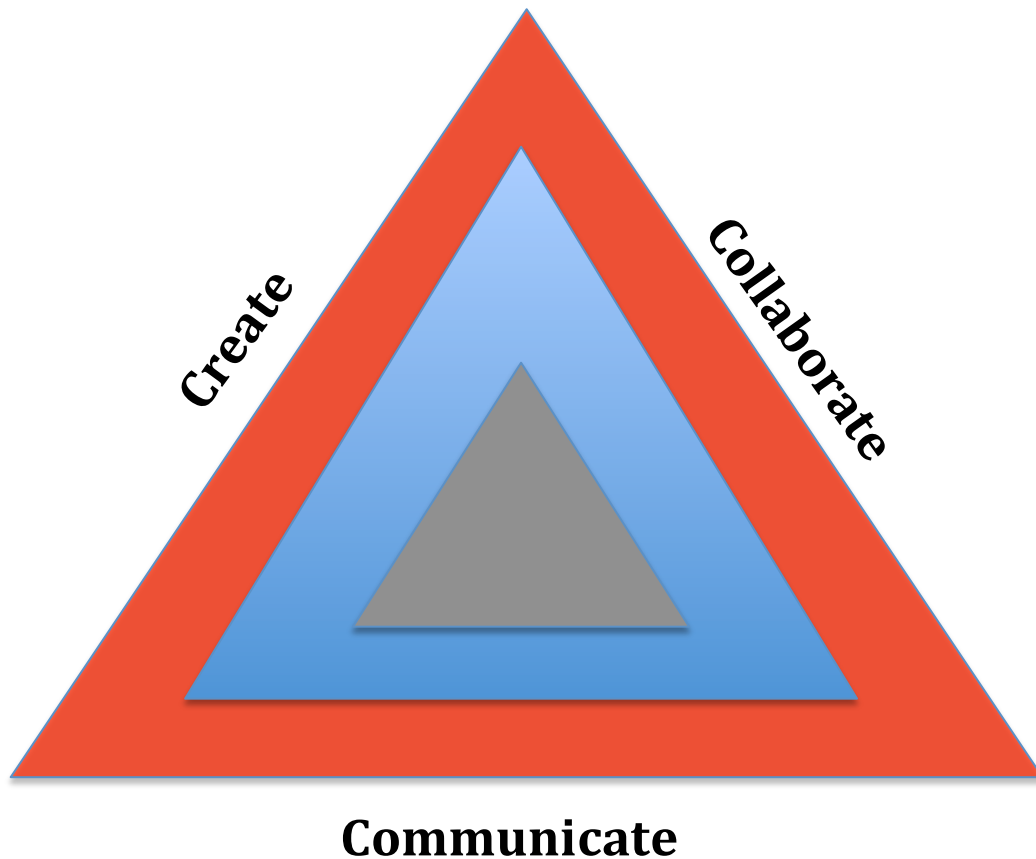


## **A Vision of a Successful School**

***Communicate. Collaborate. Create.***



**Through collaboration, communication, and creativity, educational leaders will foster and promote a safe and effective teaching and learning environment focused on increasing student achievement.**

Develop your own vision of a successful school that includes successful leadership, organization of the school, and professional development for you as a leader.

### **Effective Leadership**

For a school to be considered effective and focused on student achievement, the leadership of the school must devote itself to modeling the expectations that it has set for the staff and students of the school. District leaders must appropriately, accurately, and effectively communicate and collaborate with various groups to ensure that all parties are working towards a set of common goals. Developing a vision for schools, leadership, and/or teaching and learning is vital to the future successes of school initiatives. "For a vision to be effective, it must be centered on the enduring beliefs and values that motivate individuals to strive for the highest ideals and performance" (Hoyle, English, & Steffy 1998 pg. 1). Educational leaders must clearly communicate their vision for the students, staff, and school. Hackmann et.al. (2002) state, "Vision is the total leader's blueprint and roadmap for change" (pg. 49). In order to be a positive and effective change agent as an educational leader, one must have a clear vision that is accurately articulated to staff, students, and throughout the community. In addition the effective leader does not go about this process on his or her own, he or she must collaborate with others to develop a shared vision which will increase the likeliness of buy-in from students, other staff, and community members.

Leaders in education must also be of a creative nature in relation to problem solving, building management, and instructional leadership. Not one single method of leadership will work in every situation that presents itself throughout the day or

year. By having a set vision in which there is buy-in, educational leaders can base decisions off of the vision and supporting goals. Kay and Greenhill (2012) state, "A vision that is born of genuine, authentic, passionate leadership is never simple, never cookie-cutter, and never easy. But it is necessary" (pg. 2).

### **School Organization**

The organization of the school is an essential leadership component of both instructional leadership and building management responsibilities. Educational leaders need to have an appropriate and functioning method of organization for systems within the school building, with staff, and for students. It is not difficult to think about and to say exactly what the organization of the school should look like. However, the problem arises when a new educational leader is hired and needs to establish himself/herself as a trusted leader throughout the organization. The new leader must learn as much as he or she can about the school culture, dynamics, staff, students, and community as quickly as possible. The importance of effective communication, collaboration, and modeling on behalf of the educational leader with staff, students, and the community is critical to success of future initiatives and will aid in the process of building leadership credibility and capacity.

### **Professional Development**

"A deep, well-thought-out conviction about your vision serves as the most important anchor for you, your school, or your district" (Kay & Greenhill 2012 pg. 2). In order for professional development to be meaningful and effective for teachers and the school, it must be centered on goals that support mission and

vision of the school, need according to student achievement data and choice.

Education is about growth, not only the growth of the students in the classroom, but also the growth of teachers leading the classroom instruction. Promoting and fostering a culture of continuous learning is an important component of being an instructional leader in schools. In order to establish this in schools, the leader must get his or her hands dirty with the staff/students and the staff must see the leader as the first learner in the district/school.

In collaboration with teaching and support staff, school leaders must also carefully and continuously monitor and analyze student achievement data in order to gain insight on areas in which professional development would be appropriate.

The process of providing professional development consists of planning, implementing, evaluating, and improving (Bernhardt 2013). The use and analysis of student achievement data such as MAP assessments, NeSA (Nebraska State Accountability), and formative classroom assessments, can help educational leaders and teachers plan for appropriate and meaningful professional development experiences. Once there has been a plan created, the next step is to implement the best plan of action that addresses the needs and supports the goals of the vision. After the implementation has commenced, educational leaders must allow teachers time to implement the plan with fidelity prior to changing course. The evaluation stage begins after the implementation has had an appropriate amount of time and enough meaningful data has been collected to make informed instructional decisions. The final stage is improvement. How can the program, learning, or needs improve based upon the knowledge acquired during the professional development process?

References:

- Hackmann, D.G., Schmitt-Oliver, D.M., & Tracy, J.C. (2002). *The standards-based administrative internship*. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- Hoyle, J.R., English, F.W., & Steffy, B.E. (1998). *Skills for successful 21<sup>st</sup> century school leaders: Standards for peak performers*. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.
- Kay, K. & Greenhill, V. (2013). *The leaders guide to 21<sup>st</sup> century education: Seven steps for schools and districts*. Upper Saddle River, NJ. Pearson
- Bernhardt, V.L. (2013). *Data analysis for continuous school improvement*. New York, NY. Routledge